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TOWARD A LESS HUNGRY WORLD

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"Let it never be said of this generation that we were able to orbit the earth with satellites, but that we were unable to put bread and rice into the hands of hungry children. Let it never be said that a generation that could literally reach for the stars was unable to reach for--and grasp--the potential for plenty, and progress, and peace that is at hand." With these words Secretary of Agriculture Freeman challenged the 1,300 participants who had come from more than 100 countries to attend the World Food Congress being held in Washington in June 1963. At the opening of the Congress, President Kennedy had told the participants that the world had the ability and capacity to eliminate hunger from the face of the earth and that this was the primary task of present generations.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations had called the World Food Congress to focus attention on the growing specter of hunger and malnutrition in the world. Sometimes we talk almost glibly of one-half to two-thirds of the world's people being hungry. One of the international studies indicates that out of the total of 61 nations almost 2 billion people, or 69 percent of the population, are poorly fed or hungry. Moreover, the population that is hungry is increasing in number faster than the population that is well fed.

The security of the world demands that greater efforts be made to correct the imbalance between the hungry and the well-fed. A community of nations cannot long exist with such devastatingly sharp contrasts between the haves and the have-nots.

The participants stressed that plans for making the world less hungry and eventually well-fed must be directed toward "self-help." Also the food supply and the nutritional status of a population group are not isolated factors, they are intimately involved with every other phase of living. Therefore, attention to solving problems in economics, sanitation, medical care, and education must accompany attention to providing better food.

Help for this urgent task comes from many sources. The Food and Agriculture Organization, one of the specialized agencies of the United Nations family, takes leadership in coordinating the efforts of the nations of the world to improve food production, distribution, and consumption. It does not produce food, nor does it buy or distribute food. It does take responsibility for technical assistance on a broad front in agriculture, nutrition, and home economics.

In 1960 FAO intensified its efforts by launching a 5-year Freedom from Hunger Campaign to dramatize the world's need for food. This focuses on information and education, on research, and on national action programs. It recognizes that although food alone cannot bring order, decency, and peace into the world, certainly there can be no peace in a hungry world.

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The U.S.A. contributes very significantly toward providing food and needed services to developing countries through its Food-for-Peace Program. It provides for the donation of the part of our surpluses that cannot be sold or bartered. These donations are made through voluntary organizations such as CARE, church relief services, and UNICEF. This is called the People-to-People Program and all of the food packages that are distributed are labelled "Donated by the People of the United States." Under this phase of the program alone, we are providing some form of supplementary food ration to more than 100 million people every day in the year and about 75 percent of these are children.

Another and newer use of our food is the food-for-wages plan. We are reaching some 5 million people with a program in which they work on projects to improve community facilities, such as building a school or road or extending the water supply, and in return the workers receive some form of food as their wages. In this way we are trying both to rebuild the worker's concept of the dignity of work, and to help them achieve a better level of living through their own accomplishments.

To many, nothing would seem simpler than giving good, wholesome food to people who have too little to eat. But experience shows that it is not easy to give food away. It is not cheap for the country that gives it away nor can it be absolutely free to the country that receives it. The recipient government must provide acceptable conditions for warehouse storage and for distribution of the food. Some recipient

countries fear to accept too much food because it might handicap the development of their own agriculture. Some countries that export food fear that their economies might be disturbed if too much food were to be distributed free to their prospective customers.

Some people are concerned that our distribution of cereal products may further distort rather than help balance the nutritive value of the diets of low-income groups in developing countries. Wheat can be effectively used to provide more food, but both grain products and customary diets need to be supplemented by locally produced vegetables and fruit, carefully chosen leguminous seeds, and where possible, by additional livestock products, meat, fish, poultry, milk and cheese, and eggs. Despite the millions of tons of nonfat dry milk that we donate every year, plus the other noncereal products, our surplus foods are not available in the proportions best suited to supplement the diets of all poorly fed countries. Our surplus foods alone cannot feed the world but can help nations while they increasingly become able to help themselves.

Calorie and protein deficiencies are of most immediate concern in treating the world's malnutrition, not only because deficiencies are great but because of the logistic problems of the quantity or volume of food that must be produced, transported, distributed, and stored by the food deficit countries or by the countries helping them. Calories and protein cannot be supplied by minute doses as can a vitamin! Specific vitamin and mineral deficiencies exist among various population groups but foods that supply energy and protein

[illegible]

can be counted on to help supply these other essentials. Also the most deficient areas have tropical climates where locally produced fruits and vegetables can be available for use in needed quantities. Enrichment of staple foods is another means available for supplying the nutrients needed in very small but important quantities.

Mixtures of plant protein foods that will prevent and cure protein malnutrition in young children have been developed from a variety of different foods locally available and relatively low in cost. Any new foods that are to find widespread acceptance, whether by infants and young children or by entire families, must be integrated into existing diets; they must be compatible with existing customs and food habits. Nutritional improvement of people takes place only if and when a better diet is actually consumed.

Improved nutrition is more than a matter of availability of food resulting from adequate production and distribution. It is also a matter of education. Education will be the key to the success of all endeavors to extend our goal from "a less hungry world" to "a well-fed world." Education, not just in the formal classroom sense of the word or in the literacy sense, but in terms of each homemaker the world around knowing how to feed her family. It is in the home, meager or spacious as the physical framework may be, that people of the world are fed, and it is traditionally the women of the world who perform this task and ritual.

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Country leaders know that the supplementary feeding programs that they are introducing for school children, mothers, industrial workers, and other important groups are of great value. They must realize, however, that if they want to improve the nutritional levels of their countries, they must improve the food in the homes.

The necessity for educating women in the emerging nations if there is to be significant progress toward a better life for all people cannot be stressed too much. The woman in the family who becomes aware of her family's needs and wants and how these can be met is one of the strongest motivating forces in achieving these goals.

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Young people have been the significant finding because
that they are interested in social action, justice, equality,
peace, and other important issues and at the same time, they are
realistic, aware, that it may not be enough to have the traditional leaders
of their generation, they need leaders who look to the future.

The research has revealed that in the current situation
there is no significant progress toward a better life for all
people around the world. The world is still in a state of
economic crisis and the world's people are still poor and
it is one of the greatest challenges facing the world today.

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